

## **Office of Environmental Information National Environmental Information Exchange Network Grant**

EPA's FY 2002 Appropriations Bill contained \$25 million for grants to be used in partnership with States, Tribes, and Territories to advance the National Environmental Information Exchange Network (Network). Tribes will receive funds from a designated set-aside of \$2.5 million.

### **Purpose**

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The goal of the National Environmental Information Exchange Grant Program is to advance the Network and State and other partners data integration efforts. Funding will be provided through grants to all States, Trust Territories, and Tribes to provide core capacity building capabilities as well as promote Network participation.

### **Background or Overview**

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In May 2001, EPA gathered feedback about options for design of the proposed Network Grant Program through the Information Management Workgroup (IMWG) which is co-chaired by EPA and the States and is comprised of approximately 24 State Environmental Agencies and numerous EPA Regions and program Offices. The Environmental Council of States shared these options with all 50 States. Regions held meetings to solicit comments for their States, Territories, and Tribes about the concept of the Network. In August 2001, EPA conducted a meeting with State, Tribal, Region, and HQ Program representatives to further discuss the design of the Program.

### **Current Activities**

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The grant guidance contains the following components:

- **Network One Stop Grants** - Grant funds will be dedicated to advance readiness to participate effectively in the Network.

These grants are open to States, Tribes, and Territories that have not previously received a One Stop grant. Funds are intended to support the broader goals of the One Stop program which were to:

1. Reduce the reporting burden on industry, States, and local governments;
2. Foster multimedia (air, water, waste) and geographic approaches to problem solving; and,
3. Provide the public with meaningful, real-time access to environmental data.

- **Network Readiness Grants** - Grant funds will be dedicated to support specific capacity building for Network participation.

These grants are open to States, Tribes, and Territories and must clearly identify core capacity building functions they plan to undertake based on one or more of the following functions:

1. Establish an official information source and steward;
2. Develop technical infrastructure for Internet node operation that will enhance the technical infrastructure and capabilities needed to support node operation;
3. Connection of information resources to the node which will extend the range data sharing, access, integration, and decision tools to partners on the Network;
4. Node implementation which will establish the agency's single management point for providing its information to the Network; and,
5. Node/TPA Management which will enhance the overall management capacity to be a participant on the Network.

- **Network Challenge Grants** - Grant funds will be provided, through a competitive process, for any group of States, Tribes, and Territories to work collaboratively to promote the development of Network-related components with a broad benefit to all Network participants.

These grants are open to States, Tribes, and Territories. Projects must advance the functionality of the Network through the immediate flow of higher quality environmental data; create a model that could be easily implemented, have broad applicability, and be readily transferable to a wide group of Network participants; achieve reduction in reporting and accessing burden; provide increased public access to environmental data; and involve collaboration throughout the project.

- **Network Administration Grants** - Provides funding to support technical and administrative functions of the Exchange Network for State, Tribes, and Territories.

### **Available Funding**

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Approximately \$16,000,000 will be made available for Network One Stop and Network Readiness Grants. Approximately \$5,000,000 will be made available for Network Challenge Grants.

Network Administration Grants will total \$1,500,000.

Tribal set aside has been established at \$2,500,000.

### **Achievements or Accomplishments**

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- Draft Guidance published for comment October 2001.
- Final Guidance published February 2002.
- Web Site established February 2002.
- Regional All States Meeting Briefings— Ongoing.
- Applications received by EPA on April 1, 2002.
- A total of 109 proposals were received.
- A review panel consisting of EPA HQ and Regional representatives convened April 29 - May 3 for final review of proposals. Panel recommendations were presented to EPA CIO. Recipients were notified of proposal acceptance in early June 2002.
- Final grant awards will be made August 2002.

### **For More Information**

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